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Responsabilità scientifica: Prof.ssa Maria Matilde Benzoni, Prof.ssa Roberta Garruccio

Organizzazione: Associazione Lapsus

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Lezione 5 (23/3/2015) “La costruzione della tavola italo-americana”

Relatore: Prof. Simone Cinotto, Docente di Storia contemporanea e coordinatore del Master in “Food Culture and Communications: Food, Place, and Identity” (Università degli Studi di Scienze Gastronomiche)

DISPENSA A CURA DELL'ASSOCIAZIONE LAPSUS

ABSTRACT

"Il cibo nella cultura e nell'identità italoamericana"

(Prof. Simone Cinotto, Università degli Studi di Scienze Gastronomiche):

Molti gruppi migranti utilizzano tipicamente il cibo e la cucina per articolare la loro differenza culturale, sociale e razziale nei luoghi d'arrivo, talvolta cercando di rimanere il più possibile fedeli alle loro abitudini alimentari come segno distintivo d'identità e differenza; talvolta mutandole significativamente come parte del processo di integrazione e assimilazione. Il caso degli Italiani d'America è particolarmente rilevante: come moltissimi film, show televisivi, romanzi e memorie testimoniano, il cibo ha costituito probabilmente il più importante elemento di costruzione di un'identità etnica e una parte vitale della vita italoamericana. Non solo gli immigrati italiani in America hanno costruito il proprio posto, o la propria "casa", in America attraverso il cibo e le sue narrazioni, ma hanno anche costruito il loro rapporto con la loro "casa" originaria oltreoceano, utilizzando il cibo come modalità di continua relazione con l'Italia - dalle importazioni di alimentari alla circolazione di modelli gastronomici. L'intervento spiega come l'eccezionale centralità del cibo nell'esperienza italoamericana sia dovuta a due fattori: (1) la sua efficacia nel creare solidarietà familiari e comunitarie nel contesto di forte stress connesso all'esperienza di migrazione e integrazione e (2) per l'importanza economica che il cibo ha avuto per la comunità - dalla produzione alimentare, alla vendita, all'industria dei ristoranti - contribuendo a definire non solo la cucina italiana in America ma anche l'identità italoamericana e i suoi valori come una narrazione di successo.

NOTA SULLA DISPENSA

In questa, come nelle altre dispense di Lapsus, troverete materiali di vario genere (dagli estratti di saggi, agli articoli di taglio scientifico a quelli di destinazione divulgativa, alle infografiche, alle schede di approfondimento) con lo scopo di mettere in relazione fonti e linguaggi comunicativi differenti tra loro. L'obiettivo che speriamo di raggiungere con questa scelta è fornire agli studenti un panorama ampio di suggestioni per stimolare l'approfondimento autonomo delle tematiche trattate, nonché lo spirito critico nell'intrecciare diversi punti di vista.

Ethnicity in the Business World: Italians in American Food Industries

Donna R. Gabaccia

University of North Carolina/Charlotte

"Tell me what you eat and I will tell you who you are," Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin said in 1825. One wonders what Brillat-Savarin would have concluded about the identity of a typical American eater in the 1990s: the cappucino and bagel for breakfast; the coke, hamburger and corn chips for lunch; the spaghetti, greek salad, and apple pie for dinner. Food may be a fascinating mirror of human culture, as Brillat-Savarin suggested, but it also highlights aspects of our lives that otherwise are scarcely visible. The history of American eating habits reverses, for example, the oldest (and again recently popular) narrative of immigration history, in which immigrants suffer discrimination and marginality before changing and "becoming American."¹ The history of American eating instead shows cultural change moving in the opposite direction, as Americans gradually changed their eating habits, and selectively, but also continuously, adopted foods from foreign lands. Here is a cultural dynamic—the transformation of America by its immigrants—well worth exploring.

It is unlikely that Americans could have become "multi-ethnic" eaters without the presence, ambitions and efforts of thousands of immigrant and minority businessmen who produced and sold foods.² In this paper I examine a selection of particularly successful Italian and Italian-American businessmen in American food industries. Italians are a good choice precisely because their foods have become wildly popular with Americans of all backgrounds. Nevertheless, my focus is more than a story of how Americans learned to love Italian food; that tale has already told by others.³ Instead, it is a story of ethnicity in American business and in the marketplace. We know a great deal about ethnicity in other arenas, and about Italian-Americans' place in American institutions, from schools and churches to political parties and labor unions. Ironically, however, in a country that believes "the business of America is business," immigrant businessmen have drawn less attention. The place of ethnicity in the business world remains hazy at best, its study largely limited to a small cluster of entrepreneurial immigrant groups (Koreans, Chinese, and Jewish Germans/Eastern Europeans) called "middlemen minorities."⁴

The experiences of Italian-Americans in business tell a tale far more complex and ambiguous than the story of Americans' enthusiastic embrace of Italian, and other ethnic, foods: it is a story of cultural exchange in the marketplace, but also of firm boundaries between "the ethnic" and "the corporate" in American life. Italian immigrants were arguably more successful in American food industries than in any other sector of the American economy; ethnic labelling of both foods and businessmen has been widespread in the small business sector. Still, ethnicity seems somewhat "out of place" in the corporate world of mass production. Businessmen and foods alike commonly lost their ethnic labels in the corporate arena; consumers, meanwhile, often distrust corporations to deliver "authentic" ethnicity in culinary form, and thus to continue, even today, to patronize small businessmen who produce and retail ethnic foods.

Immigrants and American Food Industries

To appreciate fully the contributions of immigrant and ethnic businessmen to the industrialization of the American economy, the reader must accept two points that seem counter-intuitive—first, that there are, in fact, food "industries;" and second that these industries were central to American economic development. Perhaps because we think of foods as natural, not manufactured products, economic historians have largely ignored connections between food production and American economic growth; they focus instead on the growth of industries like steel, railroads, textiles, and garments.⁵

Food, however, fueled not just industrial workers but the industrial revolution itself. Almost no one eats food in its natural state. Already in the nineteenth century, the scale and organization of food production and distribution became industrial. Agri-businesses developed to grow huge quantities of food to be processed (milled, canned, butchered, brewed, baked, packaged, etc.) in large, centralized manufactories. Mass production then sparked mass marketing through corporate food wholesalers and retailers. The processes of vertical and horizontal integration, the development of large bureaucratic corporations, and the proletarianization of workforces were as prevalent in food production as in other forms of manufacturing. Indeed, some of the earliest icons of American eating—those products that defined American eating habits, and differentiated them from the cuisines of the rest of the world—were mass-processed foods. These included the barrels of salt pork, ubiquitous in the American south and midwest, the white, cake-like "factory bread" made from highly-refined wheat flour, and the beef packaged, and then shipped by rail around the country from Chicago's "jungle."⁶

By any measure, these food industries were among the largest, most technically advanced, and most important of American industries of their time. Their growth, and the value of their products, far outstripped those of the steel industry, for example. Long before Henry Ford experimented with a moving

"assembly" line to manufacture automobiles, pork packers in Cincinnati and beef packers in Chicago had perfected their "disassembly" lines.⁷ And—while scarcely alone in recognizing the importance of branding his products and advertizing them extensively—Pittsburgh canner H.J. Heinz was among the first to reach a truly national audience. He began with his dill pickle charms (distributed at the Columbian Exposition) and followed up with New Jersey pier billboards that loudly proclaimed the merits of his "57 varieties."⁸ Food industries employed more workers than the steel industry well into the twentieth century. As late as 1929, 875,000 laborers (or about 10 percent of all American workers in manufacturing) worked in 58,148 food processing establishments (which constituted about one-quarter of all manufacturing establishments).⁹

Food was big business in the United States; it was also an industry where immigrants—Italians among them—were over-represented. Of course, foreigners were over-represented as laborers in almost all American industries before World War II: the growth of American industries, and their almost insatiable demand for unskilled labor had helped make the U.S. attractive to immigrants from abroad. Industrial work became an immigrant economic "niche," where immigrants sometimes outnumbered natives, and where they were consistently over-represented relative to their actual numbers.¹⁰

In American food industries—unlike steel, oil or railroads—immigrants were also over-represented as operators and managers of business enterprises. (Only in the garment industry does one find a somewhat parallel case, with considerable investment and management by immigrant entrepreneurs, mainly German, and later Eastern European Jews.) German entrepreneurs developed the American lager beer industry;¹¹ Jews created their own food processing businesses to guarantee kosher purity;¹² successive waves of foreigners made wine first on the east coast, then around the Great Lakes and finally in California.¹³ Disproportionate numbers of German immigrants found success in brewing, baking, butchering and meat packing,¹⁴ while in California, people spoke of the most successful Japanese and Chinese potato or asparagus growers as "kings" of their large domains.¹⁵ In parts of the south, foreigners dominated retail grocering and the restaurant trade. Greeks specialized in lunchrooms, candy stores, and soda fountains; Germans and Chinese specialized in grocering. And in cities throughout the east, midwest, and west, Chinese, German, Greek, and Italian immigrants pioneered in offering low-priced meals for sale in restaurants.¹⁶

Italians, like other immigrants, found work and business opportunities in the production and sale of food. By examining three food industries where Italians were concentrated disproportionately—winemaking, restaurants, and the retailing of produce (fruits and vegetables)—we see three ways ethnicity mattered in market relations and in American business in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A final example—the mass production and sale of processed Italian foods (notably spaghetti and pizza)—then shows how both

businessmen and foods could "lose" their ethnic labels in the corporate world, while surviving as ethnic specialties down to the present in small businesses.

Wine: An Ethnic "Enclave" Market

One of the reasons that Italians and other immigrants were over-represented as businessmen in American food industries is that ethnicity and American regionalism so deeply shaped consumer tastes during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹⁷ Immigrants, as consumers, had distinctive culinary preferences that only their fellow immigrant businessmen understood. Ethnicity became a kind of cultural capital, possessed initially only by immigrants; it allowed the entrepreneurial to produce and sell foods to consumers of the same background. Ethnic-specific demand for food had no parallel in the steel or railroad industries: there was no "ethnic" demand for an "ethnic" steel or oil in the same way there was an immigrant consumer wanting Italian foods delivered by other Italians. Indeed, ethnic consumer tastes created quasi-monopoly market conditions for immigrant businessmen. The list of goods produced and sold by Italian businessmen to Italian customers is a long one, including imported olive oil, canned tomatoes, espresso coffee beans, dandelion greens, broccoli, pasta, conserva, and special breads.

Markets linking immigrant producers and retailers to immigrant consumers to satisfy ethnic-specific culinary tastes have been called "enclave markets."¹⁸ Most were small, local markets, which opened ample opportunities for small businessmen with little financial capital. Local markets provided far fewer opportunities for large-scale production or retailing, or for the huge profits they could bring. Still, in a few cases, enclave markets grew to considerable size, as did the businesses that competed in them. Among Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe, the kosher food industry served an enclave market that encompassed most of the upper midwest and east coast Jewish "ghettoes." Among Italians, a wine industry developed for an enclave market that stretched from the west to the east coast, linking western producers with eastern retailers and consumers. In this marketplace, ethnicity figured in three interconnected ways, for it labeled consumers, businessmen, and product alike.

Italians did not so much create, as transform, the California wine industry. Spanish and German Franciscan missionaries from lower Mexico had first brought their "mission grapes" with them to upper California in the late 1700s; elsewhere in British North America, and in the early U.S., French and German efforts to produce a palatable drink from native grapes repeatedly foundered; efforts to produce from European vines in Ohio, New York, and Missouri proved more successful but not equal to imported wines.¹⁹ California provided a more hospitable climate for European grapes, and their cultivation spread rapidly from the southern mission towns to northern California even before the "Gold Rush" of Europeans and Americans in 1849. The founders of

new California vineyards in the 1850s began producing wine for eastern immigrant consumers (among whom Germans were numerically dominant). California's vintners were themselves usually foreigners like the Frenchmen Pierre Pellier and Pierre Mirassou in San Jose and Etienne Thee and Charles Lefranc (founders of Almaden) at Los Gatos; the German Carl Wente and the Irishman James Concannon in Livermore Valley; the German Charles Krug and the Finnish Gustav Niebaum (founder of Inglenook) in Napa.²⁰ Most specialized in the production of sweet, white wines; a few remaining Californians of Spanish descent cultivated mission grapes to produce red wines.

Already by the 1870s, Italians settling in California created a strong market for Mediterranean products, including wines. In 1879, for example, the state imported 4 million gallons of wine, 140,000 cases of sparkling wine, and 500,000 gallons of brandy along with 1500 tons of figs and 300,000 gallons of olive oil.²¹ After 1880, a million and a half new Italian immigrants settled in the U.S., three-quarters of them in the northeast. They created a vast potential market for domestic wines—7000 Italians in Trenton, New Jersey, alone supported 51 sellers of wines and liquors.²² Bottled Italian did not travel well, and in any case imports were too expensive for immigrant consumers. But Italian immigrants were also not particularly interested in the sweet white wines that were California's specialty.

After 1880, Italian immigrants began to buy vineyards from the earlier California wine pioneers, and to invest in new land and production facilities to produce wines more to their own taste. Their California vineyards produced many red wines, which Italian vintners labeled "tipo Chianti" but which American consumers quickly tagged as "dago red." Although the taste of "tipo Chianti" was meant to be Tuscan, its producers rarely were. Pietro Rossi and Andrea Sbarboro of the Italian-Swiss Agricultural Colony in Cloverdale, both from Piemonte, were among the most successful in producing "tipo Chianti" for a transcontinental, enclave market. Like other winemakers of this first generation of Italian wine-makers, Italian-Swiss Colony shipped blended, bulk wines in barrels cross country to Italian wholesale grocers and importers in New York and other eastern cities, where immigrants, grocers and restaurateurs, or their customers, then bottled the wine themselves.

Ironically, none of the founders of the Colony could claim much wine-making experience in Italy. Pietro Rossi, as a druggist, had some technical training, but Sbarboro ran a grocery store and a savings and loan society; a mutual friend, a physician, sent them cuttings from Italy after the Colony had purchased its first lands. Much influenced by the cooperative ideas popular among workers and petty merchants in their native Piedmont, the men (and their share-holding associates, who included Mark Fontana of the California Fruit Cannery Association, which later became Del Monte) hoped to form a colony where workers received part of their pay in shares in the company. Unable to recruit workers under these conditions, the Colony became a regular, albeit struggling, partnership; by the first decade of the twentieth century it was

financially secure enough to send Rossi to Algeria, France, and Germany to explore champagne-making and the use of new techniques for making satisfactory red wines from grapes grown in hot, dry environments. Later, together with a Roman vintner who had come to California from Argentina, Rossi senior, along with his twin university-trained sons, copied the "Tuscan" style of marketing wine in straw-wrapped bottles. (When Mussolini imposed an embargo on the straw, they turned to Mexican producers, and then substituted cellophane, which one Rossi son claimed was "just as fine looking."²³)

The early years of the Italian Swiss Colony were ones of recurring boom and bust, and intensive competition for eastern markets of immigrant consumers. In an effort to ease competition, two groups of California grape-growers joined together to form marketing cooperatives in the 1890s: a multi-ethnic group of "Americans" (mainly of the second-and third generations, e.g., the sons of German, and other central European winemakers) founded the California Wine Association in 1894; it competed with the largely Italian California Wine Makers' Corporation (which eventually bought a controlling share in the Italian-Swiss Colony). With 60,000 persons employed in the industry in 1910, and a yearly production of 50 million gallons of wine, production for eastern immigrant markets had become very big business, and Italian winemakers were among the more successful immigrant businessmen in the industry.

Italian wine drinkers still represented a limited market, however, and truly ambitious California winemakers dreamed of increasing per capita consumption (which hovered around 3 gallons in the early century) to the levels of France or Italy (e.g. 40 gallons) by convincing Americans to drink more. However unfortunate his timing, Andrea Sbarboro in the early twentieth century proved especially tireless in such efforts. Arguing against a rising tide of temperance and prohibition initiatives, Sbarboro wanted the United States to follow the example of France and provide a daily wine ration for its soldiers in order to teach men of wine's healthful benefits. He argued, also without much effect, that wine-drinking was the true solution to drunkenness in the U.S., and he proposed that drunkards be fed wine while serving mandatory jail sentences. Sbarboro even lectured a WCTU delegation that serving their sons wine as part of a good meal could be the ladies' most effective contribution to the temperance campaign.²⁴

Prohibition silenced Sbarboro, of course, and wine consumption did not increase among American consumers until decades later, in the 1960s. Immigrant consumers kept the wine industry alive through prohibition by purchasing grapes, grape concentrate, and grape "bricks" for home wine-making.²⁵ Even after prohibition, California's wine industry remained something of an ethnic enclave. Following a brief period when distillers purchased most vineyards, post-war producers like Mondavi, Gallo, Rossi, Petri, Martini, Lanza, and Cella—many of them the sons of immigrant vintners of the pioneer generation but with degrees from the enology and chemistry departments at

Davis and Berkeley—applied new technologies to the mass production of old-style blended, “jug” wines. Americans remained shy of such wines for another two decades, even though they had responded with much greater enthusiasm to the foods of Italians already at the turn of the century.

Restaurants: Ethnic “Cross-Overs”

Long before Americans learned to drink California jug wines in appreciable numbers, they had begun to experiment with Italian meals served up by immigrant restaurateurs during the mass migrations from 1880 to 1920. Spaghetti was perhaps the most important and best-loved Italian food of urban, turn-of-the-century “cross-over” markets, but Italian ice creams and oil-dressed salads also attracted favorable attention. Cross-over markets rested on new ethnic dynamics: in these markets the producers and retailers, along with their products, were firmly labeled Italian, while their customers were just as clearly not Italian.

Maria Sermolino’s memoir of her father’s Greenwich Village restaurant—called Gonfarone’s—provides a detailed, and thoughtful, examination of ethnic dynamics in the “cross-over” restaurant trade. Gonfarone’s began as a hotel for Italian migrants; it offered an inexpensive fixed price noon meal for its Italian residents in a dining room of “about fifteen tables with fifty to sixty cane-seated wooden chairs,” sawdust on the floor and the “smells, noises, and commotion of the kitchen” permeating the dining room. As it attracted consumers from outside the Italian community, however, the restaurant expanded, growing eventually to embrace five buildings along Macdougall and Eighth Street. It served businessmen at lunchtime, and in the evening, a diverse crowd of college students, clerks and white collar workers, lawyers, and professionals. Author Maria Sermolino insisted that Gonfarone’s was “not essentially an artists’ and writers’ hang-out. It had none of the trappings of pseudo-bohemian retreats and was completely devoid of all artistic trappings.” But she also describes Greenwich Village bohemians—those “impecunious American artists and writers in the neighborhood”—as frequent customers in the restaurant.²⁶

What attracted bohemians and other non-Italians to Gonfarone’s? Sermolino did not believe the restaurant’s appeal lay exclusively in its food. A typical menu in the first decade of the century included a pint of California red wine, assorted antipasti, minestrone or spaghetti with meat or tomato sauce, a choice of main dishes (boiled salmon with caper sauce; sweetbread with mushroom gravy; broiled spring chicken or roast prime ribs of beef), vegetables and salads (spinach, potatoes, green salad), a dessert (biscuit tortoni or spumoni), fresh fruit, assorted cheeses, and “demi-tasse.” At 50 cents, this menu was far more expensive than a typical workingman’s dinner, but well below the prices of restaurants like Delmonico’s, with its upper class clientele eager to try French cuisine prepared by Italian, Swiss, and German chefs.²⁷

Sermolino argued that Gonfarone's special atmosphere was as important to cross-over American consumers as its food or moderate price. Gonfarone's offered entertainments, which included a knife-brandishing chef, a juggling waiter, and a bus boy who played harmonica. Of even greater importance, Sermolino believed, was the fact that her "papa, and Madama Gonfarone, his partner (who was the head chef), and the waiters and bus boys and cooks, and the bartender and the dishwashers and musicians, spoke and thought and acted 'Italian.' This little Italian world was friendly, pleasant and gay." And that was what bohemian guests craved, even more than spaghetti bolognese. According to Sermolino, guests ate at Gonfarone's to learn and to practice new values as they ate. Her father "helped propagate among Americans a simple, Latin variety of hedonism. They opened up new approaches to sensory and spiritual pleasures. ... They brought new tastes, new sounds, new scents, new form, new colors, but above all, new feelings to America." They taught "life was not all hard and earnest" but "an adventure to be enjoyed."

These were precisely the values that appealed to Bohemian eaters, and other middle-class Americans tempted to rebel in smaller ways against the self-restraint and moral probities of Victorianism. The case of San Francisco's Italian restaurants makes the linkage between food, Latin "hedonism" and Bohemianism even clearer. There, too, the Italian restaurant Sanguinetti's had offered a table-d'hôte with "dago red" for local factory workers before the 1906 fire; thereafter, Bohemians, and tourists directed there by hotel guides, dominated among its clientele. San Francisco's Bohemian club supposedly formed around the Italian table of another nearby restaurant, operated by Joseph Coppa. Coppa had come to San Francisco from Turin via Paris and Guatemala, and his restaurant—known before the fire for a large mural—became the meeting place of "Coppa's School of Literature," a group described as "harding drinking high rollers" who took inspiration from Coppa's "Table Red" wine. San Francisco guidebooks pointed tourists to restaurants with "Bohemian atmosphere"—including sawdust on the floor, an informal, talkative chef or owners, singing bartenders and a clientele of intellectuals, artists, or patricians cultivating an anti-Victorian rebellious flair to their dress or leisure time pursuits.²⁸

"Crossing over the boundaries of taste" in this way was quite common in U.S. cities during the early years of the twentieth century. American consumers of differing class backgrounds, "crossed over" to eat foods from a variety of ethnic traditions in drastically different settings. While immigrant consumers and working-class Americans sampled the multi-ethnic offerings of diners, and street (pushcart) vendors, middle-class Americans "went slumming"—an evening's activity that usually included dinner in a "foreign" restaurant. Historian of New York night life Lew Erenberg has described how Americans thus pursued "the same lack of responsibility" they imagined the Bohemians enjoying when they ate adventurously from foreign foods while still remaining "committed to the world of respectability" in the rest of their lives.²⁹

In all these cases, American consumers wanted Italian foods precisely because they were not Italian consumers, and because Italian food seemed new and exciting to them. Ethnicity became something American consumers wanted to buy, enjoy, and experience. The ethnicity of the restaurateur guaranteed the authentic ethnicity of his products, even though the restaurateur was often busily engaged in inventing or adopting his cooking to appeal to his American customers. Consumers saw market exchanges like these as adventurous, pleasurable, and romantic—qualities that in turn defined Italians themselves in outsiders's eyes.

As Italian food served in restaurants became popular, Italian businessmen became even more disproportionately represented in the restaurant industry. Gonfarone's, like other immigrant restaurants, recruited their workers through ethnic channels: only Italians worked at Gonfarone's, from the lowliest of dish-washers to the waiters, chef, and owner. The Italian "cross-over" restaurant became a training ground for new generations of Italian-origin restaurateurs. The most ambitious of the dishwashers and waiters viewed their employment as a period of apprenticeship in food service. When they knew enough or had saved enough, they went on to open similar restaurants of their own, often in new locations, and appealing to new markets of multi-ethnic consumers. In this same fashion, Italians rose to prominence in other markets where neither the foods they produced nor the customers they served were of Italian origin. In such markets the ethnicity of the immigrant businessmen remained important in organizing networks of trade but it had become irrelevant to the consumer.

Produce: Immigrants and Food without Ethnicity

In the produce trade, thousands of Italian immigrants grew and sold vegetables and fruits—a skill rooted in old country habits certainly—but neither the fruits and vegetables they sold nor the consumers they sought brought ethnic tastes or desires into the marketplace. Indeed, consumers in the early twentieth-century seemed not to care that the men and women who sold them their fruits and vegetables were Italians or other immigrants. That Italians (along with Chinese, Greek, Japanese, and other immigrant truck farmers and retailers) predominated among producers and sellers of fruits and vegetables seemed just a curious fact of life, unrelated to the market exchange itself. This is a pattern urban Americans know in our own times, when newer immigrant groups—notably Koreans—have come to dominate the fruit and vegetable stands once manned by Italians.

Even more than homeland expertise—e.g. cultural capital—ethnic networks explain Italian's prominence in the produce trade. In the same way that family, neighborhood and ethnic ties delivered only Italian waiters to Gonfarone's, preparing some of them to go on to open their own businesses, so too, ethnic ties linked Italian pushcart vendors to Italian grocers, to Italian commission agents,

to Italian truck gardeners, creating an Italian-managed and organized system of produce distribution. As early as the 1850s, Sicilians in New Orleans dominated the importation of fruits from their homeland; ties to co-ethnics quickly made fruit vending an early specialty for Italians in many American cities.

It is even fair to claim that Italian immigrants created the produce national distribution system used throughout the U.S. in the early years of the twentieth century. Its development originated with Joseph Di Giorgio, an immigrant from Sicily who as a businessman "marched along with or a bit ahead of, much of our agricultural history" to deliver tropical, Florida-, and California-raised fruits throughout the country.³⁰ Di Giorgio's expertise and familiarity with fruit was clearly linked to his Sicilian past, and his system of auctioning fruits built on obvious European precedents. But the products he sold carried no ethnic labels. He did not sell Italian food, and his customers did not care that he was Sicilian.

Joseph Di Giorgio's father, Salvatore, had been a landowner in "Cefalù," where he raised lemons commercially for export to the U.S. Dissatisfied with both his lemon broker (in Baltimore) and his son (who did not want to study for the priesthood), he sent the 14 year old Joseph to New York with a cargo of lemons in 1888 or 1889. (Di Giorgio himself later claimed he ran away.) When Di Giorgio arrived in the U.S., urban Americans ate smaller quantities of native-grown citrus or other fruits than they do today. Until about 1870 they were as likely to purchase lemons and oranges from Sicily and dried fruits from the Mediterranean, and pineapples, coconuts and bananas from the West Indies, Cuba and Central America as native varieties. These exotic, and imported, fruits figured prominently in special holiday meals and in Christmas present treats in the nineteenth century.

With the help of *paesanti* in Baltimore, the young Di Giorgio rented a store to sell his lemons. Since he could market these only in the summertime, he sought a winter occupation, and became interested in the import of bananas from the West Indies. Duplicating a marketing practice common in Europe, Di Giorgio set up auctions for his imported fruits in New York, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Cleveland, Cincinnati, and St. Louis. Eventually, fruits came also from California and Florida to these eastern cities; they travelled, furthermore, on the same refrigerated cars that delivered meat from these cities to the agricultural hinterlands.

According to Di Giorgio's nephews, auctions near railroad terminals in large cities received shipments of fruit, catalogs, and bills of lading during the night; the auction house set up samples in different rooms in the early a.m. Sales then followed between 8 a.m. and 12, with deliveries beginning after noon. Within 24 hours after fruit arrived in New York, it was in the hands of thousands of retailers, from municipal markets, to street vendors. The auction collected a commission on all sales. (Some produce auctions like these survive today, but

most went out of business as chain stores and supermarkets began to purchase fruit independently and directly from agribusinessmen in the 1930s.)

As oral historian Ruth Teiser noted of Di Giorgio, "his success was due to the fact that he knew first what the market was, and then worked back to supply what the market wanted."³¹ In 1910, Di Giorgio began to expand vertically, acquiring lands and canneries in California; by 1920 he had purchased the Sierra Vista Ranch, a large farm that was still desert, along with orchards in the Pacific Northwest, totalling about 24,000 acres. Later he purchased citrus groves in Florida. Linking auctions, shipping, and growing, he formed the Di Giorgio Fruit Company in 1920. Like his American counterparts, Di Giorgio depended heavily on immigrant labor to grow, transport, and can his produce. As a big employer, however, Di Giorgio showed little interest in hiring through ethnic networks, and most of his workers were not Italians. (In fact, in the 1960s his company would become embroiled with Mexican laborers organized by Cesar Chavez.)

Di Giorgio's business resembled enclave and cross-over businesses in most other ways: it remained a family firm, employing many family members for two generations—about sixty years. Di Giorgio involved members of his family in his expanding business even after he went public and organized as a corporation in 1920. He had no children of his own, but his brothers and nephews operated auctions houses, managed orchards and farms or handled banana imports. "We always spoke with one voice about the company and the family," one nephew insisted. As founding "father" of a family enterprise, and until Di Giorgio's death in 1951, "no important decision was made that it wasn't first submitted to him either in writing or on the phone or in person." An outsider concurred, "He was very domineering, but he knew what he was talking about....I always called him 'Uncle.' All of his nephews could call him 'Uncle,' so I told him 'Joe, I'm going to call you Uncle. I seem to get along better with calling you Uncle than calling you Joe.'"³²

With no children, Di Giorgio liked to believe that "he built the business and his brothers and sisters built the family." His eldest nephew J.S. Di Giorgio became the main decision maker for the company (in which Di Giorgio personally maintained 51% ownership), and J.S. then oversaw diversification of the company into processing, wine making, and canning after World War II. (Like other corporations in the 1950s and 1960s, faced with sharp challenges from organizing farm workers, the Di Giorgios increasingly withdrew from growing, having concluded that "farming of this type of specialty crop is not suitable for a corporation...[it]—is better suited for families and partnerships.")

Only in the 1960s, with the aging of the second generation, did the Di Giorgio family recruit outsiders from the broader world of corporate America to prepare a managerial succession. "At some point," his nephews sadly concluded, when telling interviewer Ruth Teiser that an outsider, Peter Scott was now chief executive of the corporation, "every family has to change and go...."

Di Giorgio found success in national markets by mass marketing products with no identifiable ethnic labels. Unlike cross-over businessmen, he never hired his laborers elusively through ethnic networks although he did work extensively with family and fellow Italians to develop his system of distribution. In the second generation, family members remained employed in managerial positions in a business now organized as a corporation. By the third generation, family members owned stock, but outsiders managed and represented the business to the corporate world. Whatever ethnicity, or ethnic associations, Di Giorgio and his kinsmen collaborators had initially brought with them into their corporation, disappeared with their children and grand-children. And their ethnicity had never much mattered to their consumers in the first place.

Corporate Spaghetti, Corporate Pizza: Vanishing Ethnicity

As the story of the Di Giorgios suggests, ethnic labels could disappear as an element of market relations in the corporate world of mass production and retailing. The evolution of spaghetti from a specialty served at restaurants like Gonfarone's to a standardized canned product, as well as pizza's migration from enclave to cross-over to mass markets, shows even more clearly how ethnicity could "vanish" in the corporate world.

Take for example the story of mass produced, canned spaghetti, first produced by the Franco-American company. French emigre Alphonse Biardot founded the company in 1887, along with his sons Ernest and Octave, locating in Jersey City, near the tomato fields of the garden state. Having worked as a majordomo in the Greek royal household, Biardot's goal was to "market foods that would introduce Americans to French traditions of masterful cooking." Franco-American canned higher price specialty goods aimed to appeal to a cultivated palate. Among them was "spaghetti a la milanaise"—a tomato, cheese and macaroni combination. Franco-American's canned spaghetti became nationally popular, however, only after Arthur Dorrance purchased a controlling share of the company. Arthur was the younger brother of John Dorrance, the founder of Campbell's canning and processing company in Camden. In 1915, Arthur sold his Franco-American stock to John, and in 1921 Franco-American merged with Campbell's, giving an Italian food, first canned by a French immigrant, access to Campbell's national distribution system.³³

At almost the same time another company, founded by an Italian immigrant, entered the competition. Chef Boyardee products originated with Hector Boiardi, a chef from Piacenza, Italy, whose brother worked in the hotel business and helped him get started in the U.S. in the 1890s. Hector Boiardi first had his own Italian restaurant in Cleveland, then decided to can and distribute his sauce, initially packaging it with dry spaghetti and a packet of grated cheese, through his own business "Chef Boiardi Food Products Company." Boiardi changed the name of his company (and its product) to Boyardee in the 1930s,

in order to ease pronunciation by non-Italians. By the late 1930s, Boiardi was successfully selling canned spaghetti to A&P stores; Boiardi even became a supplier to the U.S. army during World War II, further building a taste for Chef Boy-Ar-Dee among returning G.I.s.

The G.I.s who ate Chef Boyardee may have assumed they were buying Italian food when they purchased spaghetti in a can. But the baby boomers and their mothers who ate canned spaghetti in the 1950s no longer bought the product from the immigrant businessman Boiardi. In 1946 he had sold his company to American Home Foods, a large conglomerate. Boiardi served initially as occasional consultant and adviser to American Home Foods, but he was neither a shareholder nor a manager in the corporation. Neither production workers nor managers of the branded, canned spaghetti were Italian-Americans, and the profits from Chef Boyardee and Franco-American went to an all-American mix of shareholders. It is unlikely that consumers thought of Spaghetti-O's or their dinosaur-shaped spinoffs of the 1980s as Italian food.³⁴

Pizza's ethnic label also threatened to vanish once it was in corporate hands, and mass produced and marketed by Wichita-based Pizza Hut. Restaurant and eating guides of the 1930s still had to explain pizza ("a favorite southern Italian dish resembling pie-crust, decorated with cheese and tomatoes" or a "kind of potato pancake") to American consumers. In the 1950s pizza "crossed over" to urban consumers who ate it at pizzerias also popular with immigrant and second-generation Italian-Americans.³⁵ In Wichita, Kansas (population 250,000 in 1960), by contrast, only two such Italian pizza parlors existed, and pizza was not widely known or eaten by non-Italians. There—not in the center of Italian-American life in large eastern cities—Pizza Hut got its start. None of its founders was Italian-American. The chain subsequently expanded through the midwest, with its multi-ethnic, but largely non-Italian, consumers.

Pizza Hut encountered real problems selling its product, when—lured by broader markets—it ventured out of the midwest to try to sell pizza in the northeast. There, unlike in Wichita, multi-ethnic consumers already knew the pizza of hundreds of Italian-American small businessmen. According to Jamie Coulter of Pizza Hut, "Pizza Hut originally went into the East with a thin crust, which is a cracker-thin crust, and a spicy sauce and once it operated there for a couple years it realized that the palate of the consumer was different in those markets. Eastern customers at Pizza Hut declared, 'This stuff isn't pizza, it's matzoh with cheese on it.'" Pizza Hut responded with a great deal of market research, developing a "thick'n'chewy" pizza for eastern consumers who "did not like the midwestern style chain pizza." Ultimately the corporation found it had to accommodate diverse tastes by offering a different pizza sauce and crust in Connecticut and Long Island.³⁶

Italian-Americans played no role in the creation of Pizza Hut, the corporation which was soon marketing pizza around the world as an icon of American fast food eating. Recent immigrants, and some younger Americans, too, seem not to know of the food's Italian origins. But Italian-Americans, along

with millions of their neighbors who knew pizza either from their enclave or cross-over pizzerias or from travel in Italy, did play a role in creating Pizza Hut's competitors. Throughout the country in the 1970s and 1980s, thousands of "Mom and Pop" pizzerias—small businesses—opened to provide "new ethnic" or "yuppie" consumers with a more authentically Italian-American crust and sauce. Some of these Moms and Pops were Italian or Italian-American Mamas and Papas. But many of them were new immigrants from a variety of other backgrounds. In Connecticut, for example Greeks ran 40 percent of all pizzerias, and their pizza too became an alternative to Pizza Hut acceptable to consumers who "knew the real thing."³⁷ Pizza is one of the few segments of the fast food industry where small businessmen compete successfully with corporate giants.

Oil and Water: Ethnic and Corporate in American Business

The evolution of spaghetti and of pizza suggest that ethnicity can survive outside of ethnic enclaves in "cross-over" exchanges, but that it persists only with some difficulty once foods are mass-produced, and sold by large corporations, to a national or international market. Foods that are mass produced by large corporations tend to lose either their ethnic label, or their appeal as ethnically authentic. Corporate life, furthermore, poses hard choices for businessmen, since entering the corporation threatens them, too, with loss of identities and values associated sometimes with ethnicity.

Hector Boiardi, who chose to withdraw from business rather than become a corporate manager of the foods he had developed, exemplifies a wider trend. In the California wine industry in the postwar period, too, many family businesses collapsed over tensions between two brothers or cousins—one concerned with the practical production of grapes or wines and the other who wanted to pursue new, more corporate strategies of profit-making, often through diversification, take-overs, or the creation of new tasting products like wine coolers or light wines.³⁸ As wine consumption soared in the 1970s, and as Americans of mixed backgrounds began purchasing more wine, including vintage wine, and wine by the glass, new generations of wine-makers—unconnected to Italian traditions of winemaking—increasingly replaced men of Italian origin. This was especially true in the production of fine wines, produced by young multi-ethnic "boutique" winemakers. Winemaking by ethnic Italians for ethnic Italians almost disappeared as Americans finally began to drink wine in the quantities Andrea Sbarboro once dreamed of.

What is it that makes the corporate and the ethnic the oil and water of America's food industries? For Jenò Paulucci, the key conflict was between two conflicting cultures of entrepreneurship. Paulucci was the founder of Chun-King, a company which raised the question—as one humorous journalist put it—whether "an Italian American [can] find success making Chinese food in a Scandinavian section of Duluth, Minnesota?" The Italian-American founder of Chun-King was the son of an immigrant miner. A fruit barker by age 14,

Paulucci was known for his "penetrating hawking voice." Later he became a salesman in a wholesale grocery firm and attempted without success to sell dehydrated garlic. In 1947, Paulucci borrowed \$2,500 dollars and began growing and canning bean sprouts; he eventually expanded to chop suey and chow mein. In 1967 he sold out to R.J. Reynolds for \$63 million. Starting a new small business, Paulucci then developed a successful line of frozen pizza, which he also sold—this time to Pillsbury—in 1985 for \$150 million. Once again, Paulucci chose not to become a manager of his brand at Pillsbury. Instead he experimented with a number of unsuccessful ethnic restaurants, ethnic frozen dinners and a Chinese-food home delivery business called China Kwik. Paulucci was uninterested in managing mass production, or in corporate life. He saw himself as an individual and as an entrepreneur hooked on the thrill of building businesses from scratch, risking failure (which he also experienced personally) each time. He wanted to achieve success on his own, not become a manager in a corporate hierarchy. For this individual businessman, entrepreneurship and corporate life simply did not mix.³⁹

Third-generation Bohemian-American McDonald's whiz, Ray Kroc, expressed the conflict between corporate and ethnic even more vehemently than Paulucci. Proud of his own success, and proud of his ties to his Bohemian grandparents and their Chicago ethnic community, Kroc nevertheless also insisted to an interviewer "It is ridiculous to call this an industry. This is not. This is rat eat rat, dog eat dog. I'll kill 'em before they kill me. You're talking about the American way of survival of the fittest."⁴⁰ That had not been the business ethic of America's many ethnic enclave and cross-over markets. Their point of view was expressed by Cuban immigrant and Pizza Hut franchisee Arturo Torres. Torres claimed to have reached a personal agreement with Frank Carney, president of Pizza Hut, giving him unique powers within his southwest chain of Pizza Hut franchises, just before PepsiCo purchased Pizza Hut. Torres was astonished that PepsiCo seemed more interested in corporate uniformity than in honoring his supposed verbal agreement.⁴¹

Small businessmen see business differently from their corporate counterparts, and, in consumers' eyes, they apparently embody personal values like individual risk-taking, and trust, as well as ties to family, community, and consumers. For small businessmen, cultural capital continues to include the family and community ties that shape both the personnel and organization of their businesses, their feelings about their products, and their relationships to their consumer clients. About his corporate competition, one Greek pizza operator concluded optimistically, "I'm going to try the best for my customers, and that's it... If you make good pizza, or you take care of your customers, you never lose them. The Pizza Hut opened. Everybody go. Everybody they want to try it. And they told me, they went over there and they say, 'Don't ever change your pizza.' They still come back here."⁴²

This small businessman's personal attention to his consumers, his less-than-standardized product, and his ties to the family members and other Greek immigrants who work in his pizza parlor define ethnic authenticity for his customers. They are less concerned that his cultural background is not Italian; in their minds, and in his, a Greek immigrant's pizza seems more Italian or at least more authentically ethnic than Pizza Hut's. It satisfies them in a way that Pizza Hut pizza did not, and could not.

As the success of this, and other small pizzeria-operators suggests, it was not the marketplace itself, or cross-cultural exchanges within it, that destroyed ethnic labels or that "Americanized" either ethnic foods or food businessmen. Instead it was the corporate and bureaucratic organization of mass production and marketing. There, but not in small businesses, ethnicity often vanished, both from the foods corporations mass produced, and from the people it employed. The survival of foods deemed "ethnic" thus seems permanently linked to small businessmen, where foreign-born entrepreneurs continue to enjoy special opportunities, and find employment in disproportionate numbers.

Notes

1. Gary Gerstle, "Liberty, Coercion, and the Making of Americans," *Journal of American History* 84 (September 1997): 524-569; Russell A. Kazal, "Revisiting Assimilation: The Rise, Fall, and Reappraisal of a Concept in American Ethnic History," *American Historical Review* 100 (April 1995): 437-71; Ewa Morawksa, "In Defense of the Assimilation Model," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 23 (Winter 1994): 76-87; James R. Barrett, "Americanization from the Bottom Up: Immigration and the Remaking of the Working Class in the United States, 1880-1930," *Journal of American History* 79 (December 1992): 996-1020.
2. Donna Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat* (forthcoming, Harvard University Press, 1998).
3. Harvey Levenstein, "The American Response to Italian Food, 1800-1930," *Food and Foodways* 1,1 (1985): 1-24; Joseph Conlin, "The Food Habits of Italian Immigrants to America: An Examination of the Persistence of a Food Culture and the Rise of 'Fast Food' in America," in Ray Browne et al., eds. *Dominant Symbols in Popular Culture* (Bowling Green Popular Culture Press, 1990).
4. For example, Ivan H. Light, *Ethnic Enterprise in America: Business and Welfare Among Chinese, Japanese and Blacks* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); Edna Bonacich, *The Economic Basis of Ethnic Solidarity: Small Business in the Japanese American Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Ewa Morawska, *Insecure Prosperity: Small-Town Jews in Industrial America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). Some recent studies focus particularly on immigrant businessmen's interactions with African-American clients, e.g. In-Jin Yoon, *On My Own: Korean Businesses and Race Relations in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). Outside the U.S., scholars have shown greater interest in Italian migrants as entrepreneurs, see, e.g., for the U.S., S. Fichera, "Entrepreneurial Behavior

in an immigrant colony: San Francisco's Italian-Americans (1850-1940)" *Studi Emigrazione* 118 (1995): 321-345.

5. A good starting place remains Edward C. Hampe, Jr. and Merle Wittenberg, *The Food Industry, Lifeline of America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980, 2nd. ed., first published in 1964).

6. Richard Cummings, *The American and His Food* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940) remains a good starting place. Some industries have attracted historical study. On brewing, see the early study by Dr. John E. Siebel and Anton Schwartz, *History of the Brewing Industry and Brewing Science in America* (Chicago: G.L. Petersen, 1933); on restaurants, Richard Pillsbury, *From Boarding House to Bistro: The American Restaurant Then and Now* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990); on baking, William B. Panschar, *Baking in America, Economic Development* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1956) and Hazel Kyrk, *The American Baking Industry 1849-1923, As Shown in the Census Reports* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1925). The best studies of meatpacking focus on its workers: see James Barrett, *Work and Community in the Jungle: Chicago's Packinghouse Workers, 1894-1922* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Roger Horowitz, *Negro and White: Unite and Fight!: A Social History of Industrial Unionism in Meatpacking, 1930-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Rick Halpern, *Down on the Killing Floor: Black and White Workers in Chicago's Packinghouses, 1904-1954* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

7. Siegfried Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History* (New York: O.U.P., 1970).

8. E.D. McCafferty, *Henry J. Heinz, A Biography* (New York: Bartlett Orr Press, 1928); Stephen Potter, *The Magic Number, The Story of "57"* (London: Max Reinhardt, 1959); Robert C. Alberts, *The Good Provider: H.J. Heinz and his 57 Varieties* (London: Arthur Barker Limited, 1973).

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15. See "Immigration in Pacific Coast Agriculture," Saloutos papers, box 63, file 630, Immigration History Research Center.

16. See, e.g., Greeks in University of Alabama in Birmingham, Oral History Research Office, "The Greek Community in Birmingham, Mr. Nicholas Christu, February 3, 1977," copy in Saloutos papers, box 82, file 810, Immigration History Research Center.

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18. Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat*, ch. 3.

19. Pinney, *A History of Wine in America*; Peter Joseph Poletti, "An Interdisciplinary Study of the Missouri Grape and Wine Industry, 1650-1989," Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, St. Louis University, 1989.
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27. Thomas Lately, *Delmonico's: A Century of Splendor* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1967).
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31. Unless otherwise noted, this section, along with all direct quotes, is based on Teiser's interview with Di Giorgio's nephews, see esp. pp. 21, 34, 50, 60, 71, 92. See also "A Tribute to Joseph Di Giorgio Sponsored by the Kern County Chamber of Commerce and the Kern County Board of Supervisors, February 2, 1937," in the Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley.

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35. See, e.g. James Rian, *Dining in New York* (New York: John Day Company, 1930), p. 34.
36. Robert L. Emerson, *Fast Food: The Endless Shakeout* (New York: Lebhar-Friedman, 1979), pp. 147, 205-206, 234.
37. Lawrence A. Lovell-Troy, *The Social Basis of Ethnic Enterprise* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990).
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39. Caroline Wyman, *I'm a Spam Fan* (Stamford, CT: Longmeadow Press, 1993), pp. 65-66; Lilian Ng, "Yeo Takes a Bite of American Market," *Asian Business* 25, 12 (December 1989): 60.
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42. Lovell-Troy, *The Social Basis of Ethnic Enterprise*, p. 185.

L'AMERICA: UNA CUCINA D'IMPORTAZIONE?

L'America ha regalato al Vecchio Continente numerose piante (mais, pomodoro, patata, fagiolo) che l'hanno protetto dalle carestie o vivacizzato i suoi piatti tradizionali (peperoncino). Ma ha anche preso molto: dagli iberici, la canna da zucchero e il maiale; dai francesi e dagli olandesi il caffè, la birra e il vino; dai tedeschi gli hamburger e dagli italiani la pizza.

La forte urbanizzazione del nord ha creato un modello di consumo industriale caratterizzato dall'internazionalità delle preparazioni e dalla destagionalizzazione degli alimenti.

Una tradizione gastronomica riesce a sopravvivere grazie alla presenza di ristoranti di qualità e alla promozione del territorio. Nelle aree latine sono ancora molto diffusi i piatti e le bevande locali (tortillas, pisco ecc.)

Fast food e sapori locali

Considerare gli Stati Uniti la patria del fast food è misconoscere la funzione identitaria dei sapori e dei piatti degli immigrati africani, europei e asiatici, spesso riuniti in comunità.

L'industria li ha integrati nelle filiere globalizzate, ma esiste una grande varietà di sapori locali nella pasticceria (pudding), nei formaggi (*stilton*), nei piatti (*Irish stew*, piatti asiatici), nella salumeria ecc.

New York, crocevia alimentare

La Grande Mela ha davvero il mondo sulla sua tavola, con i suoi 18.000 punti di ristoro: negozi alimentari di lusso, modesti *deli* ebraici che offrono bagels viennesi, coffee shop, trattorie rustiche, ristoranti macrobiotici. I quartieri di Little Italy e Chinatown competono con quello indiano dell'East Village e con il Lower East Side, dove i gustosi *samosas* greci e i *malai* ai funghi sono venduti a poco prezzo. La città è un autentico osservatorio di abitudini etniche.

L'AMERICA DEL NORD: TANTI SAPORI VENUTI DA LONTANO



«Con i conquistadores l'America ha cominciato a sapere di fritto.»

CHRISTIAN BOUDAN, LE CUCINE DEL MONDO, DONZELLI, 2005

Il vino americano, un altro modello vitivinicolo?

Fu Cristoforo Colombo a introdurre la vite in America, insieme alla canna da zucchero, «introducendo la concorrenza tra il vino dei coloni e il rum degli schiavi» (J.R. Pitte).

Il primo vino californiano fu realizzato nel 1769. In Cile, la viticoltura moderna inizia a svilupparsi nel 1851, grazie agli immigrati spagnoli, mentre in Argentina sono i francesi e gli italiani ad avviare la coltivazione del merlot e del cabernet sauvignon. Il modello vitivinicolo è quello del «château» bordeaux. La produzione statunitense è profondamente influenzata dalle aspettative dei consumatori, dal gusto che essi desiderano trovare in una bottiglia. In California, queste esigenze di mercato hanno comunque condotto alla produzione di ottimi vini, in grado di competere con quelli europei e, talvolta, di superarli nelle classifiche internazionali.

Capitolo Secondo

Stati Uniti d'America e melting pot

Rebecca R. Gray e Carole M. Counihan

«Melting pot» è un'espressione che definisce in modo adeguato la cucina amorfa degli Stati Uniti, una mescolanza di diversi modelli alimentari etnici forgiata dai vari ambienti naturali e dal procedere incessante del capitalismo. Le cucine etniche e regionali si sono mescolate e sono state trasformate dall'incontro con l'*agribusiness*, l'industria di trasformazione del cibo e le capillari reti di distribuzione. La dieta americana è stata influenzata fin dal Seicento dall'arrivo di nuove cucine con gli immigrati di ogni angolo della terra. Se cercano con attenzione, i buongustai troveranno cibi deliziosi in tutti gli Stati Uniti, nelle case, nei ristoranti e nei mercati degli agricoltori che offrono i prodotti locali e le diverse cucine etniche, ma la cucina nazionale prevalente si basa su cibi conservati ricchi di zucchero, sale e grassi e poveri di fibre e frutta e verdura fresche. La cucina nazionale americana è quella dei supermercati che vendono cibi pronti e dei *fast food* che popolano sempre di più autostrade e strade cittadine. Sono gli alimenti dell'*agribusiness* e dell'industria alimentare, che percorrono in media 1500 miglia per passare dal produttore al consumatore. Cibi geneticamente modificati arrivano sulle tavole degli americani con sempre maggiore frequenza, e quelli pesantemente trattati con prodotti chimici minacciano la salute. Ma gli agricoltori e i loro mercati, l'agricoltura sostenuta dalle comunità e iniziative come il progetto dell'Arca di Slow Food permettono a una parte degli americani di mangiare cibi freschi, locali, prodotti con sementi tradizionali e senza uso di prodotti chimici.

Una rassegna storica della dieta americana

Fin dalla nascita delle colonie americane nel Seicento, la dieta americana è stata caratterizzata da un miscuglio di varie tradizioni etniche e ambienti naturali diversi. I primi coloni europei, principalmente francesi, inglesi, spagnoli, olandesi e schiavi dell'Africa occidentale, portarono con sé una varietà di tradizioni culinarie e materie prime, tra cui polli, maiali, bovini, ovini, caffè, riso, sesamo, zucchero e igname. I coloni trovarono inoltre nel Nuovo Mondo una quantità di cibi che non conoscevano, in particolare i tre raccolti principali delle popolazioni in-

digene – mais, fagioli e zucca – che incorporarono gradualmente nella propria dieta. Un ricettario del 1796 di Amelia Simmons è considerato il primo libro di cucina «americano» perché contiene ricette in cui compaiono i tre principali ingredienti indigeni, tra cui quella per preparare una torta di zucca simile alle ricette che si usano oggi.

La carne e il pane furono i due alimenti di base della dieta nelle prime fasi. Gli americani mangiavano molta più carne degli europei e le carni più popolari erano manzo e maiale, soprattutto il secondo perché era facile conservarlo. I prodotti del mare erano comuni solo nelle zone costiere, date le difficoltà di trasporto. Se in molti paesi europei, come la Francia e l'Italia, si preferiva il pane di grano, per i coloni il frumento costava troppo, sicché consumavano pane di mais, segale, avena e altri cereali.

Due dei fattori principali che influenzarono la dieta degli Stati Uniti nei secoli XVIII e XIX furono l'afflusso di immigrati che portavano con sé la propria cucina e le innovazioni tecnologiche che permisero la nascita di un'industria alimentare consolidata. I progressi tecnologici che incisero sull'alimentazione furono l'invenzione della cucina economica, che rese infinitamente più facile il compito di preparare da mangiare; il miglioramento dei trasporti, per esempio ferrovie e sistemi di canali; i metodi di refrigerazione e congelamento, che permettevano di conservare a lungo gli alimenti; e la trasformazione e l'inscatolamento dei generi alimentari. La rivoluzione industriale spinse molti che fino a quel momento lavoravano nei campi ad andare a lavorare in fabbrica nelle città, in cui non producevano più il cibo che consumavano e costituivano perciò un mercato pronto per l'industria alimentare.

La regionalizzazione della cucina americana

La dieta americana è sempre stata una mescolanza di cucine e ingredienti regionali ed etnici. Poiché fino all'Ottocento si usavano soprattutto, per necessità, ingredienti e tecniche di preparazione locali e poiché i vari gruppi etnici tendevano a raggrupparsi, nacquero cucine regionali sulla base di una mescolanza di prodotti locali e gusti influenzati dall'etnia. I cambiamenti che hanno trasformato il mercato alimentare in America nel corso del Novecento hanno inciso profondamente sulla dieta. La nuova dieta ha un carattere molto più nazionale; dato che le grandi aziende forniscono una gran parte del cibo disponibile tramite catene nazionali di supermercati e *fast food*, gli americani possono mangiare gli stessi piatti in qualunque parte del paese. Esistono però ancora preferenze regionali, così come influenze etniche.

La dieta del New England coloniale era orientata dai coloni inglesi e influenzata dalla vicinanza al mare. Il pesce era una parte importante dell'alimentazione, in particolare il merluzzo salato. La zuppa di pe-

sce locale, fatta con molluschi, patate, mais, sedano, cipolle e panna, è un piatto tipico della regione. Oggi le aragoste del Maine sono considerate una prelibatezza, ma prima del Novecento i pescatori di quella zona disdegnavano i crostacei, che equiparavano a insetti. Anche la carne di bue in New England era consumata più che in ogni altra regione, in parte grazie agli inverni freddi che permettevano di congelare la carne; il pane di mais invece non era diffuso quanto in altre zone. La predilezione per il grano, la segale e l'avena culminò nella ricetta del *Boston brown bread*, che costituisce tuttora un simbolo della cucina del New England.

Nel corso dei secoli XVIII, XIX e XX la cucina degli Stati Uniti nord-orientali venne influenzata profondamente dalle varie ondate di immigrati, quasi 600 milioni in duecento anni, i quali tendevano a raggrupparsi in zone diverse del paese, modificando la dieta di quelle zone. Nel Settecento e nell'Ottocento prevalsero gli immigrati tedeschi e irlandesi, che portarono con sé i propri cibi tra cui tagliatelle, patate, cavoli e piatti di carne, in specie carne di maiale e suoi derivati. Tra il 1880 e il 1924 arrivarono nelle città della costa ondate di emigranti dell'Italia meridionale con i propri cibi. Alla fine del Novecento nelle maggiori città, tra cui New York, Philadelphia, Baltimora, Boston e Washington, sono arrivati nuovi gruppi immigrati dall'Asia, da Cuba e dall'Africa.

Le zone rurali di New York, della Pennsylvania, del New England e della West Virginia si affidano tuttora a una dieta tradizionale, pubblicizzata con successo tra i turisti. Nelle campagne della Pennsylvania orientale, per esempio, ristoranti, mercati degli agricoltori e dettaglianti vendono cibi «olandesi della Pennsylvania», tra i quali il dolcissimo *shoo-fly pie* fatto con la melassa, il *chow-chow*, un misto di sottaceti, il *lebanon* e lo *sweet bologna*, pasticcini di pollo e di prosciutto. A fine primavera e d'estate i mercati degli agricoltori abbondano di prodotti cresciuti e venduti dai coltivatori locali, molti dei quali fanno parte di sette anabattiste, in particolare gli Old Order Amish, che attribuiscono tuttora un grande valore all'agricoltura. Asparagi, denti di leone, fragole, pomodori, peperoni, sedano, pesche, mele, pere e molta altra frutta e verdura sono coltivate e vendute a livello locale e alcune sono ancora varietà trasmesse di padre in figlio.

La cucina del Middle West riflette la presenza del gran numero di immigrati tedeschi e scandinavi. Il consumo di latticini è il più alto della nazione ed è altresì evidente la preferenza degli europei del nord per la carne rossa, le patate e la pasticceria, mentre il consumo di verdure fresche è il più basso del paese. Il Minnesota continua a essere la roccaforte delle cucine scandinave.

Il sud probabilmente è la regione più tradizionale del paese in fatto di cucina; la dieta della regione nacque dall'incontro tra le cucine dell'Africa occidentale portate dagli schiavi, le influenze inglesi e le ma-

terie prime presenti negli stati sudorientali. Il consumo di carne rossa, maiale e prodotti del mare è tra i più alti del paese; anche farina di grano, zucchero, patate dolci, grasso e olio e verdure in scatola sono molto popolari nella zona. Il granoturco, consumato sotto forma di *Johnny cake*, pane e farina grossa, è diffuso al pari del riso. Nei centri urbani come Charleston e Savannah è evidente l'influenza dell'immigrazione e vi si possono trovare numerosi ristoranti etnici. La cucina della Florida riflette la presenza dei settentrionali amanti del sud che portarono con sé la passione per alcuni piatti tradizionali e dei tanti immigrati cubani, cui si devono i fagioli neri, le grigliate di carne secca e le spezie. New Orleans continua a essere la culla della cucina creola, costituita dal connubio tra i cibi francesi, spagnoli, africani e americani nativi. Tra gli ingredienti di cui fa uso figurano peperoni piccanti, ostriche, gamberi d'acqua dolce e di mare, fagioli, ibisco, pomodori e riso.

Lungo il confine tra il Messico e gli Stati Uniti, che è stato definito «la cortina di tortilla», prevale una cucina sudoccidentale, un ibrido fra tradizioni culinarie degli americani nativi, messicane e spagnole. Il cereale fondamentale è il granoturco, con cui si fanno le *tortillas* che accompagnano fagioli, peperoncini, patate, riso, carne di maiale, bue e pollo. Piatti diffusi sono i *burritos* fatti con *tortillas* e *enchiladas* di farina di grano, e i *tacos* di *tortillas* di granturco, ripieni di fagioli, carne o formaggio. L'incremento degli immigrati europei-americani nel sud-ovest ha creato la cucina «Tex Mex», che unisce ingredienti americani tradizionali come le uova a materie prime ispaniche come peperoni, *burritos* e *fajitas*, che sono strisce di carne di bue, maiale o pollo cotte con cipolle e peperoni e mangiate con *tortillas*, e poi il *guacamole* (una pasta di avocado) e il *pico de gallo*, una salsa piccante a base di pomodoro fresco. Questa cucina è diventata sempre più popolare e diffusa in tutti gli Stati Uniti, non solo nella versione commerciale dei Taco Bell ma anche grazie all'aumento di ristoranti messicani familiari che utilizzano manodopera messicana.

Il nord-ovest che si affaccia sul Pacifico si è distinto per aver lanciato spesso nuove tendenze gastronomiche in America: la recente passione per il caffè di qualità è nata a Seattle e si è trasformata in un affare miliardario. Il consumo di carne rossa è relativamente basso, così come l'uso di grassi, zucchero, bevande analcoliche e verdure in scatola. Gli immigrati asiatici hanno portato in questa zona le loro preferenze alimentari, con conseguente consumo di riso, verdure e prodotti a base di soia.

Anche l'industria del *fast food* si conforma alle preferenze regionali. La pizza prevale nel nord-est, soprattutto nelle città, di solito condita solo con formaggio ma anche con peperoni, salsicce, verdure o acciughe. I locali dove si mangiano *hamburger* sono particolarmente numerosi in tre zone: le città dell'ovest, le grandi pianure e gli stati meri-

dionali che si affacciano sul Golfo del Messico. I *fast food* specializzati in pollo fritto sono presenti soprattutto nel sud, oltre che a Chicago e Detroit, mentre nel nord-est e nel Midwest ce ne sono ben pochi.

Il ruolo del cibo etnico nella dieta americana

Il cibo etnico ha sempre fatto parte della cucina americana e riflette le diverse ondate di immigrazione nei diversi periodi storici. La mescolanza di ingredienti inglesi, africani occidentali e nativi è stata l'elemento che ha caratterizzato inizialmente la cucina americana. Ai primi del secolo XIX, come abbiamo detto, i gruppi immigrati più numerosi furono tedeschi e irlandesi, mentre dopo la guerra civile (1861-1865) affluirono negli Stati Uniti molti immigrati nuovi, tra cui scandinavi, europei orientali e italiani. Nel corso del Novecento si sono affermati molti esercizi etnici che hanno lasciato il segno sull'odierna cucina americana, per esempio quelli tedeschi, finlandesi, greci e irlandesi. Spesso disponevano anche di un bar nel quale si ritrovava la popolazione etnica del quartiere: di solito si rivolgevano solo ai membri del proprio gruppo. Tuttavia, con il passare degli anni la maggiore concorrenza di altri esercizi etnici e l'espansione delle grandi società li hanno spinti a rivolgersi a un pubblico via via più ampio.

Il Novecento ha assistito a un intenso scambio culinario tra gruppi etnici e gli esercizi che vendevano solo ai membri del proprio gruppo hanno lasciato il posto alla sperimentazione di cucine diverse, divenute perciò più ibride, da parte dei membri di tutti i gruppi. Molti di quegli esercizi sono stati venduti a società che hanno ulteriormente «americanizzato» i prodotti. Questa tendenza ha prevalso in tutto il periodo centrale del secolo. Tuttavia, i negozi etnici non sono scomparsi, sostenuti qua e là da clienti che rifiutavano i prodotti omogeneizzati delle grandi società, e non è svanito neppure il piacere della sperimentazione culturale culinaria.

I diversi flussi migratori nel Novecento hanno condotto in America asiatici, latino-americani, africani, gente del Medio Oriente e delle Indie occidentali, le cui cucine hanno dato il loro apporto alla corrente principale. In tutti gli Stati Uniti, e soprattutto nelle grandi aree urbane, la gente mangia sempre di più cibi come *falafel*, *hummus*, *pad thai*, verdure sminuzzate e scottate e carne secca di pollo o capra alla griglia. Tuttavia queste nuove cucine, come la gran parte dei cibi adottati dagli americani, sono state modificate e rese ibride nel processo di assorbimento. Nei ristoranti di tutti gli Stati Uniti, per esempio, si può mangiare la pasta italiana con sughi di ispirazione asiatica a base di zenzero, soia e tofu, oppure con un condimento, che si rifà al Messico, di salsa e fagioli.

Una delle prime influenze etniche sulla cucina americana fu quella degli schiavi africani portati in America nel corso del Seicento e del

Settecento. La loro cultura ha creato una cucina che oggi è chiamata *soul food*. I cuochi afroamericani nel sud modificarono ingredienti e piatti africani per adattarli alle abitudini e alle condizioni climatiche della regione. Importavano semi dall'Africa e piantavano colture come arachidi, riso, ibisco, cocomeri, melanzane, pomodori, cipolle, aglio e peperoncini. Tra i piatti preferiti del *soul food* figurano gli ortaggi cotti nel lardo, il pollo fritto, la trippa di maiale, il pasticcio di patate dolci, i fagioli dall'occhio e il riso rosso, cibi che furono cruciali per la sopravvivenza, la cultura e la storia degli afroamericani.

Nel corso del Novecento, la popolazione afroamericana del sud cominciò a spostarsi a nord per trovare lavoro nell'industria, portando con sé le proprie tradizioni culinarie tra cui piatti come il pollo e il pesce fritto, la carne di maiale alla griglia, le verdure bollite, le frittelle di granturco ripiene, il *gumbo* (una zuppa di pollo o pesce con baccelli di ibisco) e i fagioli dall'occhio. Nel tentativo di conservare la propria identità meridionale, gli afroamericani cominciarono ad aprire in città come Chicago, Philadelphia e New York ristoranti che servivano quel tipo di cucina che si è affermato con il nome di *soul food*. Sebbene oggi cucine tradizionali di questo genere stiano diventando meno popolari di fronte alle crescenti preoccupazioni per la salute, l'influenza del *soul food*, sotto forma di ristoranti che servono pollo fritto e cibi alla griglia, è largamente visibile, soprattutto nel sud.

Una grande influenza sulla dieta americana ebbero anche gli immigrati italiani, in gran parte provenienti dall'Italia meridionale e dalla Sicilia, che importarono la cucina di queste regioni con il suo largo impiego di pasta, pomodori, cipolle, olio d'oliva, formaggio e aglio. Le abitudini alimentari italiane si sono fatte strada nella dieta nazionale grazie a due circostanze. La prima è che gli immigrati italiani in genere formavano comunità molto unite nelle maggiori città in cui potevano procurarsi gli ingredienti necessari per cucinare i piatti tanto importanti per il loro appagamento sensoriale e per l'identità familiare. La seconda è che durante la seconda guerra mondiale, con il razionamento della carne, gli americani cercarono nuovi cibi e scoprirono la pasta, la salsa di pomodoro, i fagioli e altri piatti italiani a base di verdure, che adottarono e trasformarono in ibridi italoamericani.

La prima produzione di massa di spaghetti in scatola fu opera di un immigrato francese che fondò l'azienda francoamericana nel 1887, successivamente rilevata dalla Campbell's, produttrice di zuppe, nel 1921. Gli spaghetti al sugo precotti e inscatolati sono tutt'altra cosa rispetto alla pasta al dente con salsa di pomodoro che si fa in casa, a cui si sono ispirati, ma hanno fatto conoscere agli americani il cosiddetto cibo italiano e ne hanno favorito l'accettazione.

La pasta e i prodotti analoghi sono diventati pilastri della dieta americana, sia nelle case sia nei ristoranti. I ristoranti italiani costituivano

quasi il 10 per cento del totale nel 1997. Anche la pizza è un piatto largamente diffuso; due delle dieci maggiori catene della ristorazione americana, Pizza Hut e Dominoes, si sono specializzate in questo piatto. La prima pizzeria fu aperta nel 1906, ma fino alla seconda guerra mondiale questi locali furono frequentati per lo più da italiani; oggi invece gli statunitensi consumano ventitré libbre di pizza a testa all'anno.

L'immigrazione ebraica ebbe una forte influenza sulla cucina americana perché la prima ondata di immigrati ebrei (anni Trenta dell'Ottocento) era piuttosto istruita e disponeva delle risorse per aprire esercizi. Inoltre, le leggi dietetiche ebraiche erano rigorose e favorivano un «forte conservatorismo culinario» incentrato sul cibo *kosher*. Le gastronomie ebraiche nacquero principalmente per vendere carne *kosher*, ma il contributo più famoso di questi negozi alla dieta nazionale è stato il *bagel*, diventato un cibo popolare per la colazione e il pranzo tra gli americani, spesso generosamente spalmato di *cream cheese* (il formaggio fresco e burroso inventato dai quaccheri inglesi della Pennsylvania nel secolo XVIII). Il *bagel*, un prodotto lievitato affine al pane, spianato tradizionalmente a mano e bollito, fu ben presto prodotto in massa. La cucina ebraica ha avuto un impatto su grandi città come New York, Philadelphia e Chicago, in cui piatti ebraici come *knish*, *pastrami*, *lox* e torta di formaggio sono diffusi. La «torta di formaggio di New York» è diventata popolare grazie alle rivendite ebraiche ed è oggi il dolce più ordinato nei ristoranti che fanno parte delle varie catene. I messicani-americani del sud-ovest hanno stimolato la produzione di cibi tradizionali. Imprese come la Molino Para Nixtamal macinavano la *masa* per le *tortillas* e Francisco García aprì uno stabilimento per produrle. Oggi le vendite di *tortillas* superano quelle di ogni altro pane speciale, compresi i *bagel*, i *croissant*, i *muffin* (focaccine dolci di pasta lievitata) e le *pita*, un fatto che rispecchia la crescente diffusione del cibo messicano nella dieta americana. I cibi messicani e «Tex-Mex» costituiscono il segmento maggiore negli esercizi che vendono cibi etnici al dettaglio. Negli anni Sessanta Taco Bell ha aperto il primo ristorante di *tacos* e nel 1995 era la quinta catena di ristoranti degli Stati Uniti. Un numero maggiore di americani consuma cibi messicani pronti come *burritos* e *nachos*, anche se sono relativamente pochi a preparare interamente i piatti messicani.

La cucina cinese è un'altra realtà etnica che si è fatta strada negli Stati Uniti. Gli immigrati cinesi giunsero in America, soprattutto in California, negli anni Sessanta dell'Ottocento; molti di loro provenivano dalla regione della bassa Valle delle Perle e portarono con sé la cucina cantonese, uno stile particolare che rappresentava agli occhi degli americani la cucina «cinese». Nelle città maggiori, in specie San Francisco e New York, cominciarono a sorgere delle «Chinatown» alla fine dell'Ottocento e all'inizio del Novecento, e i cinesi aprirono ristoranti destinati soprattutto ad altri immigrati cinesi. Ma, gradualmente, un nu-

mero crescente di americani cominciò ad assaggiare queste nuove cucine, trovando il cibo buono anche se misterioso. I ristoranti, per rendere più allettanti i loro menù, «crearono» piatti come il *chow mein* (verdure varie a pezzetti con gamberetti o carne, servite con spaghetti fritti) e il riso fritto, ricette che quasi ogni americano associa alla cucina cinese ma che non hanno affatto origini cinesi.

Negli anni Sessanta le nuove leggi sull'immigrazione e la situazione in Estremo Oriente hanno provocato un afflusso di immigrati asiatici, in particolare negli Stati occidentali. Sono sorti nuovi ristoranti asiatici che offrivano cucina vietnamita, thailandese e giapponese oltre che cinese. Oggi i ristoranti asiatici costituiscono più del 10 per cento di tutti quelli etnici. Inoltre, la cucina asiatica ha avuto un'influenza enorme sulla nuova cucina «di fusione» degli anni Ottanta, che combina elementi di cucine diverse.

I ristoranti e il mangiare fuori

Nel 1992 la spesa media nazionale per mangiare in casa era di 1526 dollari, di 348 per i ristoranti e di 316 per i *fast food*. Nel 1997 il 45% dei dollari finiti in cibo era speso fuori casa. Dunque l'industria della ristorazione è molto importante nella cultura americana; la sua crescita negli Stati Uniti è stata stimolata dalla competizione tra le cucine etniche e dal progresso tecnologico, i due fattori principali che sono alla base della dieta americana.

A partire dall'inizio dell'Ottocento, sono stati aperti molti ristoranti da imprenditori dei vari gruppi etnici. Uno dei più celebri ristoranti di New York, Delmonicos, fu fondato nel 1828 da un marinaio italo-svizzero; trasformatosi in lussuoso ristorante francese per l'aristocrazia newyorkese, fu seguito da numerosi altri ristoranti «francesi». Le locande tedesche con la loro birra fatta in casa godevano di enorme popolarità tra i clienti con mezzi più modesti. Nell'Ottocento divennero popolari i venditori ambulanti, che spesso proponevano una cucina straniera e in seguito aprivano piccoli ristoranti e *pub* che si rivolgevano ai lavoratori poveri. In quel periodo si diffusero anche trattorie, rivendite di panini e *self-service*, grazie ai menù semplici, ai bassi prezzi e alla rapidità del servizio. Anche l'inizio del Novecento fu caratterizzato dall'ingresso delle cucine etniche nella dieta americana attraverso la proliferazione dei carri che nelle città portavano i cibi ai meno abbienti. *Bagel*, dolci greci e le mele al forno tipiche degli ebrei offrivano ai consumatori spuntini economici e facevano provare loro nuove cucine. Questi locali crearono differenze regionali: nel sud-ovest furono inventati i *nachos* (pezzetti di *tortillas* fritte con formaggio fuso e peperoncini *jalapenos*), a New York la *egg cream* (acqua di seltz, cacao e zucchero) e in Michigan i pasticci (manzo, patate, cipolle e carote in crosta).

Oggi i ristoranti italiani, cinesi e messicani costituiscono la maggioranza dei ristoranti. La carne di bue continua a essere l'ingrediente principale nei loro menù, seguita da pollo, verdure, prodotti del mare, pasta e carne di maiale, nel solco della dieta americana tradizionale che ha sempre fatto largo uso di carne rossa e pollo; ma questo elenco rivela anche che la cucina italiana fa ormai parte della dieta americana e che si è ridotta la presenza della carne di maiale, in passato uno dei fondamenti della cucina statunitense. Nel 1995 le voci più vendute erano petto di pollo alla griglia, pasta, pollo a pezzetti fritto in poco olio e costole. Nei ristoranti di qualità le voci più vendute sono il filetto mignon, il salmone e vari piatti di pollo, mentre l'antipasto più popolare sono i calamari.

Nella seconda metà dell'Ottocento i progressi tecnologici permisero la nascita di catene di ristoranti con menù standardizzati, che di lì a poco diedero vita a quello che a giudizio di alcuni sarebbe diventato il simbolo per eccellenza della cucina americana, il *fast food*. Uno dei primi *fast food* fu il White Castle, aperto nel 1916 e specializzato in *hamburger*: si crede comunemente che il fondatore di questa catena abbia inventato l'*hamburger*, ma la cosa non è provata. All'inizio del Novecento questo cibo era relativamente sconosciuto: la sua ricetta compare nei libri di cucina solo nel 1922 e per giunta come «carne tritata ai ferri».

L'industria del *fast food* fu stimolata da due fenomeni: il *boom* dell'automobile e la tecnologia che permetteva di cucinare sul momento, per esempio il *grill*. La California meridionale fu il luogo di nascita di molti dei famosi *fast food* di oggi, compresi McDonald's e Taco Bell. Quando gli spostamenti in automobile e il mangiare fuori casa acquisirono maggiore importanza per gli americani, i *fast food* ebbero uno sviluppo enorme. L'invenzione dei *drive in*, in cui la gente poteva prendere da mangiare senza dover scendere dall'automobile, contribuì alla loro diffusione. Oggi negli Stati Uniti ci sono quasi 350.000 ristoranti con un introito annuo lordo di 173 miliardi di dollari. L'industria della ristorazione è cresciuta in misura fenomenale negli ultimi 25 anni; le vendite si sono triplicate dal 1975. Le catene di ristoranti hanno un ruolo di spicco in questo *boom*. Nel 1965 le maggiori 400 catene rappresentavano solo il 18% della vendita di cibo fuori casa, una cifra che nel 1995 era salita al 51%; inoltre, le prime 100 catene rendevano conto dell'86% delle vendite totali delle catene. Nel 1995 *hamburger* e pizza rappresentavano il 43,4% delle vendite nelle catene di ristoranti.

L'industria alimentare

All'inizio dell'Ottocento, imprenditori immigrati e locali cominciarono a fondare imprese specializzate nella preparazione di cibi e ingredienti. Nella seconda metà del secolo le industrie si fusero nel tentativo di